

CHRISTIANS  
Vary Walking,  
AND  
IMPROVING  
OF  
TIME.

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Laid forth in a SERMON  
upon *Ephes. V. 15. & 16.*

PREACHED many years past, by a  
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EPHESIANS V. 15, 16.

*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not  
as fools, but as wise.*

*Redeeming the time, because the dayes  
are evil.*



THE change of our state requires a change in our life : neither may a Christian live like a Heathen. To prove this unto us, the Apostle in this Chapter alledged two Reasons : Whereof the first is drawn from Gods gifts , the second from a Christian mans danger.

The first is in effect this : Our Conversation must bear witness to our Profession, and we must *shew forth Gods virtues*, whose children we are said to be. 1 Pet. 2. 9.

The second Reason sounds thus : They may not be secure that are in peril. We are near it, therefore we must pro-

vide against it. This latter Reason is contained in the words that now I have read unto you.

Seeing then the summ of my Text is this; *We must be careful, because we are in danger*: Ye see that our *Care*, and our *Danger* are the two principal points which we must consider in unfolding this Text.

1. Touching our *Care*, we are here taught, <sup>1</sup> Whereat it aims: and <sup>2</sup> Wherein it consists.

It aims at the perfectness of our Conversation, at our *Walking circumspectly*: It consists in two things: <sup>1</sup> In our Discretion; and <sup>2</sup> in our Thrift.

Of Discretion we have here the Work, and the Pattern: The Work is, *to take heed*. The Pattern which in this work we may not follow, are *fools*; which we must follow, are the *Wise*.

Besides this Discretion, we must have Thrift. The Text doth tell us, <sup>1</sup> Wherein we must Thrive; and <sup>2</sup> How. We must Thrive in *time*; or rather as the word *καιρος* signifies, in *opportunity*. We thrive herein by *Redeeming* it: *Buy* it we must, we cannot have it for nought: and *buy* it out of their hands that have the possession of it, who will not part with it but upon good terms.

These be the Parts which express our *Care*.

Our *Danger* is set down in few, but full words, *The dayes are evil*. Two words, but each able to quicken our *Care*. <sup>1</sup> Our life is but short, made up of *dayes*, and therefore we must make haste in our Thrift: and <sup>2</sup> The *dayes* are as bad as they are short; therefore we have good reason to be discreet.

I have laid open the Points, whereof I mean to speak: But in speaking I shall invert the order. For whereas the principal points are *Care* and *Danger*; because *Danger* is the occasion, and so the whetstone of *Care*, I will prepare you with the Consideration of the *Danger*, that thereby I may the better move you to intend the *Care*.

Let us see then how the Apostle sets forth our *Danger*, [*The dayes are evil*.]



### (3)

A *Day* is the first part of time that ever God made: We read it in the first chapter of *Genesis*; And of *dayes* all other times are made, whether Weeks, Moneths or Years: therefore whatsoever the period is, the common name which the Scripture gives it, is this of *dayes*. And there is a good *Item* in the Name: For,

1. It imports, that all Time is mortal; and why? It is compounded of that which is mortal: every *day*, we see the mortality of it; and if time be made of *dayes*, how should there be any immortality in Time? True immortality hath no *Sun-set*, as the Prophet tells us, but is one *endless* *Zach. 14. 7.*  
*day.*

2. By the word *dayes*, we are remembred, not only that Time is mortal, but also that the mortality thereof is imminent, near at hand. For it cannot be far off, when the Durance thereof is denominated by the name of *dayes*, which signifies but a short time. So that whether we be good or evil, we may here hence take a Lesson: "If we be good, not to be impatient; for though the *dayes* be *evil*, yet the *Evil* is but for the space of *dayes*. *Afflictions* are but *momentany*.<sup>2</sup> *Cor. 4. 17.*  
"If we be evil, we must not presume; though we are permitted to fulfill our wicked lusts; for we cannot fulfill them long; The Age of the freest sinner is but a period of *dayes*; it cannot be long lasting.

*Quest. But how come dayes to be accounted evil, seeing all dayes are the creatures of God, and all are nothing but the Circumvolution of the same Sun?*

*Ans.* The Astrologers fetch the goodness or badness of *dayes* from the Stars: As is their influence, so they think our times are. But God in his Law, and also in the Prophets, *Jer. 10. 2.* hath branded such Almanacks, and forbidden us to credit or consult them. We must then find another cause of the difference of *dayes*.

Though then they be all the same in Nature, yet in use they are not the same. The Son of *Syrack* tells us of a *Cap. 33.* distinction that God makes of these, in advancing some to be *Holidayes*, and leaving ther for *Working dayes*. And

indeed, as God calls us either to glorifie him for his blessings, or to humble our selves before him for our sins, or generally to serve him; we are to apportion our time, consecrating a part unto him, and moderately employing the rest in our worldly occasions.

But besides this Distinction that God makes of *dayes*, there is another that is made by Man, or rather taken from Man. For understanding whereof we must observe, That as all things were made for Man, so it was Gods pleasure, they should follow the condition of Man, and out of their reference to him and consent with him, partake of his Sin or Woe. And *Time*, amongst other things, undergoeth this Condition, and *dayes* are termed *good* or *evil*: *good*, if they be well spent, and prosperous; if otherwise, they are called *evil*. We have now to do with *evil dayes*.

There is a double *Evil*, *Malum Culpa*, Sin; and *Malum Pena*, Woe. Both these *Evils* cleave to *Time*. Of Sin the Apostle speaketh plainly, *In the last dayes there shall come perilous times*; that is, sinful. for he immediately makes a Catalogue of sins, *Men shall be lovers of themselves, proud, boasters, &c.* And the Prophets speak of Woful *Times*, which they call the *day of wrath, the day of vengeance, the day of tribulation*. Whether we commit sin, or suffer for sin; the day is named accordingly; and becomes an *Evil day*. And indeed well may this Title of *Evil* be given to the day, because there is nothing that can more lively than the quality of a *day* represent that which is meant by this Title, be it Sin or Woe.

Sin, is either the darkness of our Understanding, or the deadness of our Heart. And doth not the dimness of light, and the consequent thereof, the coldness of the air lively represent these? They do; and the Holy Ghost delights so to resemble them, as it doth the knowledge and love of God, by the clearness and warmth of the day. And as for Plagues, nothing more familiar than to compare them to a *gloomy*, to a *cloudy day*: as peace and prosperity to a comfortable Sunshine. So that the *day*, being the Object of our waking eyes,

2 Tim. 3. 1.

V. 2. 108.

Zeph. 1. 18.

Isa. 34. 8.

Judg. 10. 15.

Joel 2. 2.

Ezek. 30. 3.

Eyes, must be the Looking-glass, wherein we must behold the lively image both of Sin and Wo, if they be foul *dayes*; as, if they be fair, we may in them behold the Comfort of faring well, and also the picture of him that is good.

*Quest. But here is a Paradox; St. Paul wrote in the dayes of the Gospel, even in the first dayes thereof, and how much good do the Prophets speak of those dayes, of the Holiness, of the Happines of them; and that in Metaphors borrowed from fair dayes; How then can such dayes be Calendred for evil?*

*Ans.* Surely, if we look to the amplitude of the Church, that is become Catholick, and spreads far; or To the gifts of the Holy Ghost given for the edifying of the Church, than which there were never greater, nor in greater abundance; we must needs confess, that the world never saw better *dayes* than the first *dayes* of the Gospel. Christ tells his Apostles so; *Blessed are the eyes which see that which you see, and the ears which hear that which you hear. For I tell you that many Kings, and Prophets, and righteous men have desired to see and hear these things, and have neither seen nor heard them,* Mat. 13. 16.

Notwithstanding, if you look to the unthankfulness of men, and thereby the unfruitfulness of the Gospel, the world never saw worse *dayes*. Christs words prove very true, *Many called, few chosen*. The fourth part of the seed that is sown, is the most that holds out untill harvest: The reason whereof is, *The envious man bestirs himself; and the more Grace is offered, the more will he labour to make men receive it in vain*. And indeed the *dayes* are called *monks* evil, from him that is *monks*, that evil One: he toils out himself restlessly to draw into his fellowship either of sinning or suffering. Hereupon it comes to pass, that *Faith fails, Charity waxeth cold, and iniquity abounds*. Mat. 20. 16. chap. 13. 28. Matth. 5. 37. Luke 18 8. Mat. 24. 12.

St. Bernard Commenting upon those words of *Isaiab*, *In pace mea, amaritudo amarissima*, distinguisheth the Times of the Gospel into three periods: whereof every one consisted of evil *dayes*. "There was *amaritudo amara* in persecutions Tyrannorum, much bitterness in the time of the



Ten Persecutions : yet lived there then many Worthies which sealed Gods truth with their blood. <sup>2</sup> *Amaritudo amarior in conflictu Hæreticorum*, it was worse with the Church, when Hereticks did oppose Gods truth : yet God then had many Learned Doctors, whose pens and mouths defended the same. As the first had more Religion in their Hearts than in their Heads ; so did it live strongly in the Heads of these second, though it was not a little decayed in their Hearts. But <sup>3</sup> *Amaritudo amarissima in moribus domesticorum* : when there were neither Tyrants to try their Hearts, nor Hereticks to exercise the Heads of Christians, then the Church grew secure and dissolute ; and Superstition on one side, and Atheism on another, did eat out the Heart of true Religion.

I may not forget to tell you, That these words must be understood comparatively, *The dayes are evil*, that is, Never so evil : the nearer the End of the world, the worse. So soon as man became sinfull, he became mortal.

But yet you must mark, <sup>1</sup> That before the Flood, as mens sins were fewer, so their *dayes* were longer. After the Flood men added to their sins, and God took from their *dayes* : for they lived but half so long as those before the Flood. <sup>2</sup> In the *dayes* of *Abraham* God shortned the time more, because men grew more wicked, their life reached but half so far as the life of their fore-fathers. <sup>3</sup> Finally, in the *dayes* of *Moses*, the *dayes* of Mans Age were reduced to *threescore years and ten* : *Moses* there gives the reason, because God did set mans sins before his eyes. Since that, God in mercy hath not diminished our Time, though our sin cease not to encrease. For if he should have proceeded proportionally, long before this time there would have been no Men upon the Earth.

Psalm 90. 9.  
Vers. 8.

But we may not hence conclude, that we are in better Case : rather we must argue, that as the world draws to an end, so our sins are reserved for judgement in another world.

To conclude this point : we must be assured that the time wherein



wherein we live ; is not free from danger : we are in danger either to be infected with sin by the sting of the Serpent, or afflicted with woe by the Jaws of the Lion. The *dayes* wherein we live, though *dayes* of the Gospel, yet are they *evil dayes*. And if we be in danger, such danger by reason of the *dayes*, what remains but that we be *Carefull* ? and this is required of us in the second part of the Text.

Touching our *Care*, we are therein taught ; First, Whereat it must aim : the upshot of it must be our [ *walking circumspectly*. ] It is needless for me to observe, That in this world we are *Way-faring* men ; that our life is a *walking*, not corporal, but spiritual, and every work we do, is a step, sets us forward either to Heaven or to Hell.

Now seeing our *Works* are *walking* : From *walking* we must observe, What is remarkable in our *Works*. In our *walking* we may stray, or stumble ; fall into a by-path, or take a fall, though we keep the right way : So may we in our *Works*, either do that which is ill ; or doing that which is good, not do it well. He that commits Adultery, doth that which is ill, falls into a by-path : He that gives Alms, and doth it for vainglory, doth that which is good, but he doth it ill ; he takes a fall in a right path. It is not enough then for a man to *walk*, because there be such evils in *walking* : but *circumspection* is necessary in our *walking*, that neither we decline out of the way, nor stumble in it.

But the word used by the Apostle is *circumspectus accurately*, and requires more than *Circumspection* ; it requires exactness also. We must not only do that which is good, and do it well, but do it in the best fashion also. *Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently* : and the *Lukewarm* 1er. 48. 10. Rev. 3. 16. *Laodiceans shall be spued out of Gods mouth*. The Law requires that we love God with all our Hearts, with all our mind, and with all our strength. Deut. 6. 6. Is God our Father ? we must then *be perfect as he is perfect*. Are we members of Matth. 5. 48. 2. Cor. 5. 15. Christ ? we must then *live*, not to our selves, but he must

live in us. And if we be *Temples of the Holy Ghost, Holiness becometh that house for ever*. The best we can do, is not worthy of God: and therefore if he vouchsafe to accept our service; we should follow the Preachers Counsel: *Whatsoever our hand finds for to do, we should do it with all our power*. Cold and careless service finds as little acceptance with God, as it shews Piety in us.

Psalms 93. 5.

Eccles. 9. 10

Having opened unto you, Whereat our *Care* must aim: It 2. followeth that we now see, Wherein it consists. And the Text will shew you that it consists in *Discretion* and in *Thrift*.

Ephes. 5. 8.

1. Of *Discretion* the Apostle doth tell us, what is the work; and what must be the Pattern. The Work is [to take heed,] And indeed where there is *danger*, there *heed-taking* is necessary: as where there is no danger, there a man may be secure; The word is βλέπω *look* or *see*: Which 1. Puts a difference between them that are within, and them that are without the Church. Those are *light*, these are *darkness*; they have eyes, these have none; The Holy Ghost supposeth what they can do, when it tells them what they must do. And \* In this word we are told that as many as have eyes must use them; for the use is the end for which God bestows the ability. And yet it is too usual with men to be wanting to themselves, when God is not wanting to them. Which is the occasion why the Holy Ghost calls upon us to imploy our senses; elsewhere our ears, *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear*: and here our eyes, *Look*.

But the *looking* is as the *walking*, not corporal, but spiritual; for the Act must be suitable to the Object. If that be bodily, so is this; and this is Ghostly, if that be such.

But from the bodily *seeing*, we may learn what the Ghostly is. He seeth bodily, that opens his eyes, and fixeth them directly upon an Object; if either he winks or intendeth not that which he beholds, he doth not see; even so spiritually, if men withdraw that understanding which God hath afforded them from considering their walking, or distract it with worldly thoughts, they do not *behold*. Yet this

this

this is the fault of most men, that either wittingly shut their eyes, *lest they should see*, or at least their lusts do cast mists before their eyes, so that they cannot discern the defects that are shewed them in their *walking*.

As men fail in their Work: So do they also in the Pattern. Because through weakness of judgement, or laziness of spirit they are not able to be their own guides, nor make use of good Rules; they affect a shorter Course; to live by examples. And in this Text the Holy Ghost helps their Infirmary, distinguishing of Patterns, and advising them to follow the best.

Here are mentioned Patterns of two sorts, *Fools* and *Wise men*: Whereof both have busie eyes. But *fools* are curious in observing toys which best please them: but *Wise men* look into those things that are solid, and take content in them.

But more distinctly; A *fool* is either Natural or Spiritual: and by a natural, you may easily understand what is a spiritual. A Natural *fool* is he that knows not the end of Civil society; nor is fit for the means which are to be used for compassing that end; Therefore he, as unprofitable, is relieved out of the provident charity of the wise, who sustain him as a tolerable burden of a State. Even so a spiritual *fool* in the Church is he, that is not capable of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that apprehends not the Blessedness whereunto the Church is called, neither can frame his life to do those things which lead unto the Kingdom of Heaven. He savours better a little worldly profit and pleasure, then the Tree and Water of Life, and can better endure to be a slave to his lusts, than the servant of God.

Whereas they that are spiritually wise have their affections set on Heaven, not on Earth; and where true treasures are, there are their hearts. *One day in Gods house is* Psal. 84. 10. *better to them than a thousand elsewhere: they had rather be door-keepers there, then dwell in the Tents of ungodliness.*



Wherefore if in *seeing* we will be lead a by Pattern; we must take heed what pattern we are lead by. if we gaze upon vanity, and that takes up our affections, if in compassing that we spend our life; whatsoever we are to the world, surely to God we are fools; and like unto fools we both see and walk.

But if we lift up our eyes unto the Hills from whence  
 Psal. 121. 1. cometh our salvation, and have our conversation in heaven,  
 Phil. 3. 20. then we are wise unto God, whatsoever we are to the world: We see and we walk as wise men. In a word, we perform as much as is required in the first part of our Care, we are Discreet.

But we must not only be Discreet; We must be Thrifty also. The Apostle tells us Wherein, and How. "Wherein, in [Time] That is strange: Before you heard that the *dayes* were evil. And is that which is evil a fit subject for Thrift? No verily. Yet though in that we may not thrive, we may thrive during that. The Apostles word is *raipde*, which signifies an opportunity; though we live in evil dayes, yet they yield us an opportunity to thrive. For there is neither sin nor woe, which makes not much to the encrease of vertue in those that are good: for by a Spiritual *Antiperistasis* the children of God grow more carefull in their walking, the more dissolute they see others to be in theirs; and good men are never more resolute, then when goodness is most maligned.

We call our life Time; we should call it Opportunity: for it is such Time as is a Fair, or Market, a bartering, or chaffering time; whereof we must take the advantage, and wherein we must raise our commodities. At such times good Husbands are least idle; because then it is likely they may thrive most. If every man did so esteem every day of his life; so much of our life would not be (as commonly it is) wasted in that which is too truly called Pastime. And indeed *aliud agendo*, or *nihil agendo*, or *male agendo*, we loose most of our Time; idly or evilly one day works out another. We do not use our dayes as opportunity.

We



## (II)

We do not, but we should; and if we have not so used them, what we have lost we must [Redeem.]

Quest. You will ask, *Can Time be redeemed?* Post est occasio calva, *Opportunity once lost, can never be recovered; So saith the Proverb, but Proverbs are not alwayes true, though commonly they prove so; The same God that brought back the shadow of the Sun upon Abaz, his Dial, can bring back the Sun of righteousness upon our hearts.* 2 Kings 10. 11.

Answer. To Answer which Question, we must distinguish the times. Time is either Past, or to Come: We must redeem both: the former, time past, by *Repentance*; the other, time to come, by *Zeal*. By *Repentance* we must make every day two days, for that every day ill-spent is the loss of two; even as he that walketh corporally, if he goes back one step, is cast behind two, that which he should have gone forward, & that which he went backward. And therefore if he will timely arrive at his journeyes end, he must when he returns, double his pace. Even so in our going spiritually, every day that is lost, must be fetcht back by *Repentance*: which requires that on the day thereof we do not only live well, but also let the Tears of our eyes, and sighs of our Hearts witness, how sorrowful we are for that which we have done ill. We must also forbear whatsoever contentments of the flesh, which were the provocations unto sin; and mortifie it by watchings and fastings, cast home again (as it were) unto the Devil the hire of the mispent day, and so recover again our right thereto.

As we must recover the time past by *Repentance*, so must we improve the time to come by *Zeal*. For a man may so intend that, as to make every day also a double day. The Wise man speaking of *Enoch*, saith, that, *He being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time.* He gives the reason, *Honourable age is not that which stands in length of time, or that which is measured by number of years; but wisdom is gray hairs unto men, and an unspotted life is old age.* And how can a young man be old, but only by making haste to be of a ripe judgement in good things, and growing exact and staid in good wayes? He that doth so, *redeems the time* that is to come; he gives away (as it were) the pleasures and profits which he

Wisd. 4. 13.

Vers 8, 9.

might with others reap out of things of this life, that he may more speedily and more fully possess and enjoy those greater, those better profits and pleasures of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is to *redeem*, or as the Apostle speaks ἐξαγοράζειν, to *buy out*.

1. *Buy* we must, For *Time* is not had, if it be past, without the price of *Repentance*: nor, if it be to come, without the price of *Zeal*. A senseless and careless Christian is not fit for this Mart.

2. As we must *buy*; So also we must *buy out*, out of the hands of the Devil, the time that is past: For he scores up all our mispent *dayes*, that he may charge us with them in Judgement. And the *dayes* to come we must *buy out* from the world: for that will take them up; that they may not be spent in the fear and service of God. In a word, we must account for every *day* of our life: all should be spent well; If they be not, they are lost; and if they be lost, they must be reckoned for; and that they may be as not lost, there is no help but this, we must *redeem* them, and so *redeem* them, as you have heard.

But here we must take heed of two Rocks, whereat the Church of *Rome* endangereth her followers.

The first is, in teaching them to unburden their *Care* upon others, and putting them in hope, that other mens penitential works may satisfie for them; and so slack the care of mortification which should be in every mans own self; And indeed, they have not only thereby much impaired *Repentance*, but also enriched their own Coffers; while they make carnal Christians prodigal towards their pretended *Redeemers*. But let not us flatter our selves. Well may God, upon the humiliation of others, respite our judgement, and give us more space to repent; but remit it he will never, but upon our own humiliation; our selves must *redeem* our own *time*, and not trust to others. This is the first Rock to be shunned.

The second is too high esteeming of our own *buying*, and *buying out*. Though we *redeem* our own *time* our selves: Yet must  
 Luke 19. 6, we not overvalue our own *redemption*; but as *Zachew* first  
 8, 9 received Christ into his house, and with Christ salvation, and afterwards stood forth and redeemed both his times; that which  
 was

was past, by offering *fourfold restitution*, if he had taken any thing from any man by false accusation; and the time to come, by offering *half his goods to the poor*. Even so must we, first possess our selves of the *Redemption of Christ*; and then express our *Repentance and Zeal*, giving all the glory unto him in whom, and by whom only what we are, and what we do, are accepted of God.

Finally, Let us remember *Nazianzens Rule*, that *Dies ἐκλύσας* must go before *dies ἀναλύσας*. This life is the time wherein God appoints us to prepare for the life to come. The more *danger* there is here, the more *Care* we must take: our *Care* must not be misplaced, misled, nor mispent; we must bestow it upon our *walking*, to make it as good as may be. And it will be the better, if we *heed* what we do, and follow the best Patterns in *taking heed*: if we consider that this life is an *Opportunity*; whereof if any part slips from us, we must call it back by *Repentance*; and we must double our *Zeal*, that the time to come may the sooner fit us for our last end. Thus if we husband our time, we shall not come short in our account; especially if we take Christ into it, and present our *Repentance and Zeal* in him, who hath thoroughly purged our sins by his blood, and by his righteousness opened the Kingdom of Heaven for us.

Now to this Redeemer, that hath so dearly bought us, to God the Father that in him accepts us, and to the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who assureth this unto us, be rendred all Honour and Glory, &c.

Πάντοτε δόξα Θεῷ.



